ผลของการสอนกลวิธีการฟังที่มีต่อความสามารถในการฟังของผู้เรียนคนไทยผู้ใหญ่ที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

EFFECTS OF LISTENING STRATEGY TRAINING ON THE LISTENING PERFORMANCE OF THAI EFL ADULT LEARNERS

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้ คือ เพื่อศึกษาว่าผู้เรียนไทยในระดับมหาบัณฑิตใช้กลวิธีการฟังที่ได้รับการสอนมากน้อยเพียงไร การสอนกลวิธีการฟังมีผลต่อความสามารถในการฟังอย่างไรและผู้เรียนมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับบทเรียนที่ใช้สอนกลวิธีการฟัง ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยเป็นนิสิตระดับมหาบัณฑิตที่จำเป็นต้องปรับปรุงความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษให้ถึงระดับที่มหาวิทยาลัยกำหนดเพื่อจบการศึกษา จำนวน 24 คน ซึ่งเข้ารับการฝึกฝนการใช้กลวิธีการฟังเป็นเวลา 15 ชั่วโมงในช่วงระยะเวลา 10 สัปดาห์ โดยสมัครใจ นิสิตเหล่านี้ได้รับการฝึกให้ใช้ Cognitive และ Metacognitive Strategies ในการฟัง หลังจากการฝึกหนึ่งสัปดาห์นิสิตเข้าสอบ Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP) ซึ่งเป็นข้อสอบภาษาอังกฤษที่ได้มาตรฐานที่พัฒนาและจัดสอบโดยจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย แม้ว่าผลการวิเคราะห์ค่าเฉลี่ยของคะแนนสอบของผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยในครั้งนี้เมื่อนำมาเปรียบเทียบกับค่าเฉลี่ยของคะแนนสอบ CU-TEP ก่อนเข้ารับการฝึกกลวิธีในการฟังโดยใช้ Dependent Samples t-test จะมิได้บ่งชี้ความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติของคะแนนสอบก่อนและหลังการรับการฝึก แต่แบบสอบถามที่ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยทำหลังการสอบบ่งชี้ว่าผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยใช้กลวิธีการฟังที่ได้รับการสอนในระดับสูง และเห็นว่าการฝึกฝนการใช้กลวิธีการฟังครั้งนี้มีประโยชน์ต่อการพัฒนาทักษะการฟังภาษาอังกฤษอย่างมาก ในส่วนสุดท้ายของบทความ ผู้วิจัยได้นำเสนอข้อจำกัดของการวิจัยเพื่อการวิจัยในอนาคตต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: การฝึกกลวิธีในการฟัง ความสามารถในการฟัง ผู้เรียนผู้ใหญ่คนไทยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Abstract

The objectives of this study were to investigate the extent to which Thai graduate students used the listening strategies they had been trained to, the effect of the training on their listening performance, and their opinions regarding the listening strategy training materials. Twenty-four Master's Degree students who needed to attain the English proficiency level required for graduation voluntarily participated in the 15-hour listening strategy training over a period of

10 weeks. The participants were trained to use certain cognitive and metacognitive strategies. One week after the training, they took a Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP), a standardized English test developed and administered by Chulalongkorn University. Their scores were compared to those of the latest CU-TEP they had taken before joining the study. The analysis of the means of the two test scores using a dependent samples t-test revealed no significant difference. However, the questionnaire the participants completed after taking the post-training CU-TEP revealed that they had employed the listening strategies which they had learned at a high level and they expressed favorable opinions of the listening strategy training materials. They considered the strategy instruction highly beneficial to the improvement of their English listening skills. Finally, limitations of the study are discussed for further studies.

Keywords: Listening Strategy Training, Listening Performance, Thai EFL Adult Learners

Introduction

Background of the study and related literature

Listening ability is an integral part of communicative language ability as people spend 45% of their time in communication listening, when compared to 30% of the time speaking, 16% reading and 9% writing [1]. Therefore, listening ability is assessed by various English proficiency tests including Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP), which comprises of listening, reading and writing parts. Chulalongkorn University requires applicants to all its Non-English Master's programs to submit a minimum score of 45 out of 120 on CU-TEP, 450 on TOEFL (paper-based), or 4.0 on IELTS. However, some applicants with CU-TEP scores between 30 and 44 have been admitted thanks to their expertise in their specialized field on condition that before graduation they retake the test and meet the English requirement, or take and pass one or two required English courses (depending on their level of proficiency).

These English courses aim at improving graduate students' reading, writing and listening skills. As regards listening, the students should be able to listen for main ideas and details, and 15 class hours is allotted for this purpose. The listening materials currently used focus on equipping students with skills in listening for key words, predicting, and making inferences. The students are also taught about sound-alike words and phrases, and expressions used for different language functions. The examples and exercises are in the forms of short dialogs and talks. However, an abundant supply of audio materials readily available online has prompted the researcher, who is also a teacher of the course, to design a new set of listening materials making use of online materials in the hope that it will be motivating for students and, at the same time, contribute to their listening skill improvement.

Before designing materials, it may be useful for teachers and material designers to investigate the causes of their students' listening problems so as to design materials that respond to their needs. As regards Thai

university students, research revealed three factors contributing to the students' listening difficulties. They are:

a) The material factor including the speaker's rapid speed and the length of the input [2]

b) The listener factor including their limited vocabulary [2], poor background of English linguistic elements [3], anxiety and lack of concentration or working memory [2], and unfamiliarity with the language used, accents and pronunciation [4]

c) The teaching/learning situation factor: limited exposure to actual use of English [3, 5]

The problems due to the speaker's speed and the length of listening texts could probably be resolved by selecting listening input with a slower speed and of an appropriate length such as that from VOA Special English program. The limited exposure to English may be alleviated by students' more involvement in activities in and outside class. On the other hand, listening problems due to the listener factor can be dealt with by teaching the students how to listen or how to deal with their difficulties when listening – that is to say, training them to use listening strategies [1].

Listening strategies are part of language learning strategies which have been defined and classified differently by different scholars. These different taxonomies have been used by many researchers, and the results have been reported and discussed using different terms. For example, Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) revised version for learners of English as a second or foreign language (1990) comprises 50 strategies for language learning in general [6]. Flowerdew & Miller (2005) identified 34 strategies specifically used for listening while Rost (2002) lists only six listening strategies used by successful language learners [7]. No matter how different these classifications are, evidence from various studies lends support of the idea that listening strategies significantly contributing to language learners' better performance include cognitive strategies [8] and metacognitive strategies [9]. Cognitive strategies basically refer to mental activities for manipulating the language to accomplish a task; on the contrary, metacognitive strategies refer to mental activities for directing language learning [10].

Cognitive strategies that have been found to be employed by proficient listeners include:

• elaboration (using prior knowledge from outside the text and relating it to knowledge gained from the text in order to fill in missing information) [11, 12], making use of background knowledge [2]

• inferencing (using information within the text to guess the meanings of unfamiliar language items associated with a listening task or to fill in missing information) [11, 12], making use of context [2]

• rule-applying or paying attention to linguistic elements [2, 13]

• making prediction [2]

• listening for main ideas and details [2], setting clear goals for listening [14]

• note-taking [2, 13]

• concluding [13]

- paraphrasing [14]
- visualizing what they listened to [2]

Meta-cognitive strategies that have been reported of being used by proficient listeners include:

- planning [13, 15], directed attention [12], selective attention [11]
- monitoring (checking verifying or correcting one's comprehension in the course of a listening task) [11, 12, 15]
- evaluating (checking the outcomes of one's listening comprehension against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy) [15]

In short, before listening, proficient listeners plan what to listen to. While listening, they infer making use of background knowledge and context; they apply the language rules, make predictions, and listen for gist and details; they take notes, conclude, paraphrase and visualize what they listen to. They also monitor and evaluate their comprehension while and after listening. The participants of this study were made aware of these effective strategies, and the materials designed for this study prompted them to use specific strategies deemed appropriate for each activity.

As regards the effects of listening strategy instruction, many researchers share the view that listening strategy training contributes to a better performance of EFL listeners. However, these research studies have been done in varied designs and with EFL students of different proficiency levels. Some taught listening strategies by embedding them in listening lessons in a regular English course;

others arranged separate classes for listening strategy training. For example, Hanafiyeh & Mafakheri (2013) [16] taught Iranian university students of intermediate level of proficiency by blending a five-week metacognitive strategy training into a listening course book and found that the students performed significantly better in their listening achievement test. Moradi (2012) [17] investigated the effect of listening strategy instruction on a group of Iranian university students majoring in English after 14 hours of listening strategy instruction during the 10-week course focusing on listening comprehension of academic lectures. The analysis of the data revealed that the students who received listening strategy training significantly outperformed those in the control group in listening comprehension tests.

Studies involving listening strategy instruction separate from a regular English course include Li & Liu's (2008) [18], Zarrabi's (2017) [19], and Kettongma and Wasuntarasobhit's (2015) [20]. Li & Liu (2008) [18] reported that 20-day formal strategies-based instruction had a positive effect on seven Chinese EFL students' listening comprehension. Similarly, Zarrabi (2017) [19] confirmed that his ten 90-minute sessions of explicit listening strategy instruction given to 135 high-Intermediate EFL students aged 15-40 had statistically significant impact on their listening comprehension improvement. Likewise, Kettongma and Wasuntarasobhit (2015) [20] reported significant improvement in test scores of low-intermediate Thai university students after 6 hours of pronunciation and cognitive

listening strategy instruction over a period of 3 weeks (2 hours each week). However, apart from listening strategy instruction, students in [20] were taught English pronunciation features as well.

Nevertheless, some researchers seem to be reluctant to claim that listening strategy instruction has a direct impact on learners' improvement in listening skills. For example, Cross (2009) [21] reported that after 12 hours of listening strategy instruction embedded in his English listening class, his experimental group had a significant improvement in comprehension of BBC news videotexts but the significant impact was not evident because the control group also made significant gains. Ngo (2016) [22], likewise, did not conclude definitely that his Vietnamese EFL students' improvement in listening comprehension was the result of their participation in listening strategy instruction integrated into a regular listening course although the scores on three Cambridge Preliminary English Tests administered before, while, and after the listening strategy instruction significantly changed at the 0.05 level.

To sum up, many studies have provided evidence of the contribution of listening strategy training on EFL students' improvement in their listening performance. This researcher, who is also a teacher of an English course required for graduate students whose English proficiency is below the minimum requirement of the university (45 out of 120 on CU-TEP, 450 on TOEFL (paper-based), or 4.0 on IELTS), wishes to incorporate listening strategy instruction in her revised version of the course book. A set of 15-hour listening lessons that aims at training students to use listening strategies was designed and tried out in this study in the hope that the materials could contribute to the improvement in the listening skills of graduate students taking the course. It is worth noted here that these students could be considered belonging to a low proficiency level based on the descriptors of IELTS scores band 4: Limited User (basic competence is limited to familiar situations; has frequent problems in understanding and expression; is not able to use complex language) and band 3: Extremely limited user (Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations, frequent breakdowns in communication). [23].

Objectives

The study reported here was part of an investigation of listening strategy training and the listening performance of low-proficiency EFL learners. The following research questions were to be addressed:

1. To what extent did Master's students with low English proficiency in the study use listening strategies they had learned during the listening strategy training program?

2. Did the 15-hour listening strategy training program significantly improve the performance of Master's students with low English proficiency?

3. What did Master's students with low English proficiency think about the listening strategy training materials?

Methods

Participants: Thirty graduate students whose CU-TEP scores did not meet the minimum requirement for postgraduate study at Chulalongkorn University participated in the study. Twenty-four participants who had at least 80% attendance completed the questionnaire in the last session and took the CU-TEP one week after the training. They were between 22-29 years old and all of them had a CU-TEP score of 44 or below. They voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and signed a consent form. They were also informed that this study was unrelated to any English course they might be taking and they were therefore entitled to express their opinions freely without the fear of the teacher's influence on their grades.

Research Instruments:

• *Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP)*: CU-TEP is an English proficiency test developed by Chulalongkorn University to assess the ability of the students who apply for its bachelor's international programs and postgraduate programs. The test consists of 120 multiple-choice items (one point each; no point deduction for wrong answers). The test items are divided into three parts:

Part 1: Listening (30 items) measures the ability to identify main ideas and details in short and long conversations and semi-academic talks.

Part 2: Reading (60 items) measures the ability to identify main ideas and details, to guess meanings from context clues, to interpret and to infer. The texts are semi-academic articles.

Part 3: Writing (30 items) measures knowledge of grammar by identifying errors in sentences. The content of the sentences is about general topics.

The reliability coefficient of the test is .861 and the standard error of measurement is 4.804 [24]. CU-TEPs were used as the pre-test and post-test in this study because all the participants already had CU-TEP scores which were lower than what was required by the university and, as a result, would need to take one or both of the two required English courses; and they would be highly motivated to improve their performance in CU-TEP so as to qualify for graduation.

• *Questionnaire*: A questionnaire was developed by the researcher and reviewed by a research expert who holds a PhD in linguistics. It was designed using the Likert scale with 5 = completely agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1 = completely disagree. The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .935. It consists of five parts but this article will only cover Part 4: the participants' strategies used while taking the post-test (Cronbach's alpha coefficient = .834) and Part 5: their opinions regarding the listening strategy training materials (Cronbach's alpha coefficient = .909).

Materials: Voice of America (VOA) Special English audio and transcripts were chosen as the materials in this study for many reasons. First of all, VOA offers multimodal materials intended for English language learners with one-third lower speed than regular news broadcasts such as CNN or BBC. Moreover, in terms of content, it covers

authentic stimulating world news, current issues and semi-academic topics that students can relate to in their daily life and education. Most importantly, VOA provides audio script of their programs so that low-proficient English learners can follow them without much anxiety, and its audio, video and text files are prepared for convenient downloading. Each listening text chosen lasted 3.53-3.59 minutes and its transcription was 393-532 words long. The topics were basically knowledge of the world, health, education and current topics, which should be of interest to general audience and hardly require any background knowledge of a specific field of studies.

The materials for each lesson consisted of an audio clip downloaded from Voice of America (VOA) Special English programs and three worksheets. Worksheet 1 asked 3-4 general questions about the topic or main idea, and the main points of the text after the first listening. Worksheet 2 was the cloze passage developed from VOA transcripts with 23-30 blanks in which the students were to fill in with the content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) they heard in their second listening. Worksheet 3 required the students to answer detail questions and express their viewpoints or reflection on the topic after their third listening. The questions in Worksheet 3 were of various types such as multiple-choice, true-false, checklist, completing text summary, and writing short-answers.

Teaching Steps: Each teaching session lasted 40-50 minutes and followed the steps below:

Table 1: Teaching Steps

Time	Activities	Listening strategies Involved
10-15 minutes	• Teacher introduced the topic and brainstormed vocabulary students already had which were related to the topic.	Making use of background knowledge
	• Teacher encouraged students to predict what they would hear and taught words and pronunciation of key words in the text, if necessary.	Predicting
	• Teacher gave out Worksheet 1 and asked students to read the questions before listening.	Planning, setting listening goals/ selective attention/ directed attention
6-7 minutes	1st listening and checking answers orally	Listening for main idea, evaluating
4-6 minutes	Teacher gave out Worksheet 2 and asked students to read the passage and guess the missing words using sentence structure, grammar and content derived from context.	Inferencing, rule-applying or paying attention to linguistic elements
6-7 minutes	2nd listening and checking answers orally. Teacher gave explanations when appropriate; for example, when students made grammatical and/or spelling mistakes.	Directed attention, monitoring, evaluating

Table 1: (Continued)

Time	Activities	Listening strategies Involved
2 minutes	Teacher gave out Worksheet 3 and asked students to read questions before listening.	Directed attention
12-15 minutes	3rd listening and checking answers orally. Teacher wrapped up with reinforcement of the language elements and listening strategies learnt. Students reflected on their learning.	Listening for details, inferencing, monitoring and evaluating

These lessons were taught in weeks 2-9. The first week was spent on orientation about the research project, questionnaire administration and informal discussion about problems participants faced when taking CU-TEPs. The last session concluded the project with lists of listening strategies that should be useful when students took a CU-TEP, a practice test from CU-TEP Practice Test (listening part) and giving feedback and further explanation as necessary. Altogether, the training covered 15 hours of instruction and practice in classroom settings.

Data analysis:

The listening scores of CU-TEP taken by the participants before and after the listening strategy instruction were compared using means to find out whether the intervention enhances the students' listening performance, and a dependent samples t-test to examine the extent to which the instruction contributes to such enhancement. The data obtained from the questionnaire about the listening strategies used by the participants and their opinions regarding the materials used in the training program were calculated using SPSS and reported in percentages and mean scores.

Results

To answer research question 1 (To what extent did Master's students with low English proficiency in the study use listening strategies they had learned during the listening strategy training program?), the results are reported in the table below.

Table 2: Strategies used by the participants while taking CU-TEP after training

No.	Strategies	Rating scores										Mean	S.D.
		1		2		3		4		5			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
	While taking CU-TEP listening part, I did the following:												
1.	Listened for key words to get the main idea	0	0.00	1	4.20	1	4.20	13	54.20	9	37.50	4.25	.74
2.	Read the choices before the listening and predicted the content and questions	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	8.30	15	62.50	7	29.20	4.21	.59
3.	Concentrated on details needed for understanding better and successfully answering the questions	0	0.00	1	4.20	2	8.30	15	62.50	6	25.00	4.08	.72

Table 2: (Continued)

No.	Strategies	Rating scores										Mean	S.D.
		1		2		3		4		5			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
5.	Related new information from the listening to prior knowledge	1	4.20	2	8.30	9	37.50	9	37.50	3	12.50	3.46	.98
6.	Focused on main ideas and ignored unimportant details	0	0.00	2	8.30	12	50.00	8	33.30	2	8.30	3.42	.78
7.	Noted down key words instead of trying to write all the words heard	2	8.30	4	16.70	7	29.20	7	29.20	4	16.70	3.29	1.20
8.	Took notes systematically to show relationship of information	3	12.50	5	20.80	7	29.20	9	37.50	0	0.00	2.92	1.06
When I did not understand, I did the following:													
12.	Guessed by using context clues	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	12.50	14	58.30	7	29.20	4.17	.64
13.	Used background knowledge	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	16.70	15	62.50	5	20.80	4.04	.62

Remark: n = 24

The statistics showed that most of the participants (62.50%) prepared themselves for listening by reading the choices in the exam paper and predicting the content and questions (Mean = 4.21, S.D. = .59). While listening, most participants (54.20%) listened for key words to understand the main idea (Mean = 4.25, S.D. = .74) and over 60% of the participants concentrated on details needed for better understanding and successfully answering the questions. When they had trouble understanding the texts, most of them made guesses using context clues (58.30% Mean = 4.17, S.D. = .64) and prior background knowledge (62.50% Mean = 4.04, S.D. = .62). Eleven students (45.90%) reported taking notes of key words at a high level (Mean = 3.29, S.D. = 1.20).

To answer research question 2 (Did the 15-hour listening strategy training program significantly improve the performance of Master's students with low English proficiency in CU-TEP?), the CU-TEP scores of the participants before and after training were compared and the results are reported in the table below.

Table 3: The Difference between the participants' CU-TEP scores before and after listening strategy instruction

Parts	Skills	Pre-test (n = 24)		Post-test (n = 24)		t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Standard Error Difference
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.					
1.	listening	10.42	2.55	11.21	2.92	-1.06	23	.30	-.79	3.66
2.	reading	21.58	4.66	21.25	6.49	.23	23	.82	.33	7.08
3.	writing	8.25	2.38	10.17	3.05	-2.28	23	.03*	-1.92	4.13
4.	total	40.04	6.04	42.63	9.57	-1.21	23	.24	-2.58	10.46

Remark: * $p < .05$

The results showed that the training did not significantly improve the listening performance of the participants although it may contribute to their significant improvement in the writing skill, which probably reflected that the participants had increased linguistic knowledge of English.

To answer research question 3 (What did Master's students with low English proficiency think about the listening strategy training they had received?), the participants' answers to the questionnaire were analyzed and summarized in the table below.

Table 4: Participants' opinions regarding listening strategy training materials

No.	Opinions	Rating scales										Mean	S.D.
		1		2		3		4		5			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1.	I like this set of materials.	0	0.00	1	4.20	1	4.20	8	33.30	14	58.30	4.46	.78
2.	I believe the materials are useful 2.1 for my performance in CU-TEP	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	16.70	12	50.00	8	33.30	4.17	.70
	2.2 for learning and taking tests in other courses taught in English	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	4.20	14	58.30	9	37.50	4.33	.57
	2.3 in listening to everyday English	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	4.20	14	58.30	9	37.50	4.33	.57
	2.4 in pronunciation/speaking skill development	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	8.30	9	37.50	13	54.20	4.46	.66
	2.5 in English skill development in general	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	8.30	16	66.70	6	25.00	4.17	.57
3.	The materials should be included in either of the two required English courses.	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6	25.00	18	75.00	4.75	.44
4.	The materials covering 15 class hours are beneficial for listening skill development.	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	33.30	16	66.70	4.67	.48

Remark: N = 24

From the table above, all of the participants agreed that this set of materials covering 15 class hours are beneficial for listening skill development (Mean = 4.67, S.D. = .48) and therefore should be incorporated into either of the two English courses required for low proficiency graduate students (Mean = 4.75, S.D. = .44). Over 80% of the participants agreed that the materials were useful for their performance in CU-TEP (83.30%), in other courses taught in English (95.50%) and in everyday use of English (95.50%). An overwhelming number of participants (91.60%) liked the materials and found that they contributed to their improvement in pronunciation/speaking skills (91.60%) as well as in English skills in general (91.70%).

Conclusions and Discussion

One objective of this study was to find out the extent to which Master's students with low English proficiency used listening strategies they had learned. Data derived from the questionnaire seem to confirm that adult EFL learners in this study employed specific listening strategies they had been trained to use at a high level. They set clear goals for listening by reading the choices written in the test and making predictions about the potential questions before listening (Mean = 4.21, S.D. = .59), and listened for key words to find the main idea of the text (Mean = 4.25, S.D. = .74). They also reported concentrating on details needed for understanding better and successfully answering the questions (Mean = 4.08, S.D. = .72). That is to say, they used the strategies of *planning, predicting,* *setting goals for listening, selective attention* and *directed attention* at a high level. When they had trouble understanding, they relied on context (Mean = 4.17, S.D. = .64) and background knowledge (Mean = 4.04, S.D. = .62), both of which showed that they used *elaboration* and *inferencing* strategies at a high level, as well. These findings showed that the participants in this study used listening strategies employed by proficient listeners in many studies [2, 11-15] at a high level. However, they did not use *elaboration* and *inferencing* strategies when they understood the text as much as they did when they had trouble understanding the listening texts. This can be seen from their use of context (Mean = 3.58, S.D. = .78) and their relating new information with their prior knowledge (Mean =3.46, S.D. = .98). The inconsistency in using these two strategies seems to indicate that the strategies taught had not become automatic for these adult learners probably because the training program did not last long enough to create such automation [25].

Furthermore, the fact that these students used the listening strategies they had been taught at a high level in the post-test did not seem to have contributed to their significantly improved performance. For example, they reported making use of background knowledge and context, which involved linguistic knowledge of the language such as vocabulary and grammar, to make inferences. This may indicate that these listeners did not employ strategies properly or they did not have sufficient 'background

knowledge' to rely on. The fact that these students failed to meet the university's English proficiency requirement (45 out of 120 on CU-TEP, 450 on TOEFL (paper-based), or 4.0 on IELTS) could probably confirm their proficiency level as "extremely limited user" of English as specified by IELTS score descriptors [23].

As for research question 2, the results presented in Table 3 show that although the training did not significantly improve the participants' listening performance evaluated by CU-TEP taken after the training, it seemed to have contributed to their significant improved performance in the writing part of CU-TEP, which evaluates the test-taker's writing skill using error-detection test items [24]. This could be because these students were trained to make use of linguistic context (grammar rules and related vocabulary) when guessing the missing key words in the transcript of the listening text on Worksheet 2 before their 2nd listening (as shown in Table 1). They might therefore have gained some skill in inferencing and made use of the skill when coping with error-detection test items.

As regards research question 3, the participants of this study expressed a very favorable opinion of the materials used in this study. They liked the materials at a high level (Mean = 4.46, S.D. = .78) and benefited from the strategy training in their improvement of listening to everyday English (Mean = 4.33, S.D. = .57), pronunciation/speaking (Mean = 4.46, S.D. = .66), and general English skills (Mean = 4.17, S.D. = .57). All the respondents (100%) to the

questionnaire agreed that this set of materials should be incorporated into the English required course at a very high level (Mean = 4.75, S.D. = .44), and all of them also thought the materials covering 15 hours of class time were beneficial for their listening skill development (Mean = 4.67, S.D. = .48). The results seem to lend support for using this set of materials in the English course required for graduate students whose English proficiency level does not meet the university requirement.

When compared to earlier studies that confirmed the positive effects of listening strategy instruction on listening performance of EFL learners discussed in the introduction of this article, this study had limitations in three aspects. First of all, the participants in this study had limited linguistic knowledge of English while the participants in those studies ranged from EFL learners of low-intermediate level [20], to high intermediate [19] and advanced [21] proficiency. Besides, the participants in several studies were English majors [17, 22] or students enrolled in regular English listening courses [17, 21-22]; on the contrary, the participants in this study were graduate students in various fields other than English and they joined this study voluntarily as an extra short course without grade. This might have affected their motivation and seriousness in studying the course. Secondly, this study made use of audio materials from VOA Special English program, which is slower than the normal speed of the speakers in CU-TEPs, as the pre-test and post-test. Had this study used some VOA

materials and exposed the participants to other materials with speed and content resembling the CU-TEP listening part, the results might have been different. Or, had this study used the pre- and post-test of the similar format and content as the materials in the training, the results might have been dissimilar. Lastly, some of the participants in this study were not taking any regular English course while joining the training. These students opted for the training in the hope that they could improve their performance in the following CU-TEP and meet the university's English requirement without having to take English courses. On the contrary, EFL learners in several studies reporting favorable impacts of listening strategy training were students taking English courses [17, 21-22]. Ngo (2016) [22] even stated that it was impossible to claim that the improved performance of his participants was the result of their participation in his listening strategy instruction without contribution of the English lessons they also had during the study. These limitations should be taken into consideration in subsequent studies.

Although this listening strategy training failed to help improve the listening performance of this group of EFL students in their proficiency test, the learners themselves found the training materials beneficial and motivating in their language development. The students seemed to have learned how to listen but needed to be equipped with more linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary so they could make use of the strategies more effectively as suggested by [2]. However, with the time constraint of the class contact hours mentioned earlier, this set of materials may serve as good supplements to the listening part of the current course materials which focus more on linguistic knowledge of the language. It could be adjusted as listening tasks for further practice outside of class so the students can practice using strategies successfully and feel motivated and willingly internalize those strategies in their language learning [11]. The learners' success in using proper strategies will contribute to their increased confidence and better listening performance [13]. The fact that adult learners in this study strongly believed that listening strategy training contributed to their language development seems to reflect their willingness to be educated as to how to learn the language, which should be a great stepping stone for their autonomous and life-long learning.

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